

THE LAST MARKET SQUARE IN KRAKOW? TWO CONCEPTS OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD'S SQUARE

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ABSTRACT

Two concepts of Urzędnicze [Official] Neighbourhood's square in Krakow, Poland are discussed: the 1920s' more traditional one and the 1960s' Modernist one. The paper is based on thorough research in national, cooperative, and private archives.

The regulation plan of Urzędnicze Neighbourhood was evaluated by engineer Marian Lenk in 1924. It covered 9 hectares near the northeastern borderline of then recently extended Greater Krakow, pinpointing 78 plots, eight streets, two bridges, and the square. By 1939 the neighbourhood became part of Krakow's 600-plot new district consisting of a number of neighbourhoods and posing an example of garden suburb. Lenk—a person hitherto unknown in research—was the author or co-author of all those plans, which resulted in the district's coherence. Seven squares of various shapes and sizes were planned in the district, their two sequences culminating in the discussed square of Urzędnicze Neighbourhood. That square's plan was based on an atypical and quite original figure—specifically shaped octagon. Never granted an official name, however, in some documents it was referred to as Rynek [Market Square], appropriately for Krakow long-term tradition.

The Second World War in 1939–1945 stopped the neighbourhood's construction halfway, including the square. Its final shape resulted in part from the 1960s' projects and meant a contrast to the 1920s' idea since it reflected another stylistic approach. The traditional symmetry of buildings and plan was replaced with Modernist asymmetry, both spatial and functional. The sharing of public space with traffic function gave way to the dominance of local traffic.

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

The meaning of Polish word "Rynek" ("Market") refers to both economy (financial market etc.) and urbanism (especially: market square). Its urban meaning has to an extent been borrowed from the German word "ring"—namely a ring of passages around the built-up area of the square's inner block.

From the time of issuing the Krakow Grand Charter in 1257 until as late as the first part of the 19th century there were practically no squares in the city with one extremely meaningful exception, i.e., the market square. The Krakow Market Square, which was dedicated specifically to administrative and commercial functions, was built-up to a large extent with the town-hall complex, the large cloth-hall, two scales buildings, rows of 64 so-called Rich stalls, dozens of other scattered stalls, etc.

Since the fourteenth century the city of Krakow was accompanied with two independent towns, Kazimierz to the South and Kleparz to the North. Each of them was equipped with the market square, the size of which was comparable to the Krakow one. There was an auxiliary market square in Kazimierz and perhaps there was one in Kleparz as well. Even the late-18th-century town of Podgórze was granted both the main square and, with time, the auxiliary square, too.

It was only in the early 19th century when more new squares emerged in Krakow, after it was united with Kazimierz and Kleparz in 1800. That was in part due to the extended demolitions of the medieval city walls, churches, and other structures. The Market Squares were altered as well: the Krakow one was cleared of most structures except for the cloth-hall, town-hall's tower and a small church, while the Kazimierz and Kleparz ones were diminished by the new blocks of

buildings. Since then the idea of the city square has been popular with the planning proposals for Krakow, though many of them came to no avail. The winning entries delivered for the 1912 Greater Krakow plan competition proposed new squares including some “rynek” squares (never built) in the new districts of the growing city. In the 2010s an idea of the “Rynek Krowoderski” in the Northwest district of Krowodrza was formulated. Most recently, in 2020, an idea of the architectural competition for new “rynek” in the area of former medical complex is being considered. Of the more successful projects one has to mention the 1950s Central Square of Nowa Huta. The 1924-planned square in the Urzędnicze Neighbourhood, which is the main point of interest of this research, turned out to be less successful (Fig. 1).

	Historic name / term	Time of creation	Original shape and dimensions [5 m accuracy]	Today's official name [in Polish]	Today's shape and dimensions [with 5 metre accuracy]	Today's main function
1.	Krakow Market Square	1257	square, 200 x 200	Rynek Główny	nearly square, 200 x 200	“heart” of the city, events, tourism
2.	Krakow auxiliary Market Square	1257	rectangle, 110 x 40	Mały Rynek	rectangle, 110 x 40	occasional events
3.	Kazimierz Market Square	1335, reduced in the 19 th century	rectangle, 190 x 140	Plac Wolnica	almost rectangle, 125 x 85–95	occasional events
4–5.	Kleparz Market Square	c. 1321 or 1366, reduced and divided in the 19 th century	square, 190 x 190	Rynek Kleparski	almost trapezoid, 145–150 x 55–80	food market
				Plac Matejki	almost trapezoid, 200–205 x 40–55	Grunwald statue, ceremonies
6.	Podgórze Market Square	1784	trapezoid, 150 x 40–140	Rynek Podgórski	almost trapezoid, 130–145 x 40–140	no particular function, transit traffic
7.	Szczepański Square	c. 1807	square, 90 x 90	Plac Szczepański	almost square, 90 x 85	occasional exhibitions
8.	Nowy Square (in Kazimierz)	c. 1808	trapezoid, 85 / 75 / 60 / 70	Plac Nowy	trapezoid, 85 / 75 / 60 / 70	food market
9.	Podgórze Little Market	c. 1838 or later	irregular rectangle	Plac Bohaterów Getta	almost trapezoid, 100 / 90–115	WW2 Ghetto memorial site, transit traffic
10.	Dębniki Market Square	c. 1900 or earlier	irregular quadrangle	Rynek Dębnicki	irreg. quadrangle, 90 / 75 / 35 / 95	flower market, traffic joint
11.	Antoni Potocki Square	1924	symmetrical octagon, 25–75 x 45	–	quite irregular, 25 / 50 / 20 / 25 / 20 / 30 / 25	local traffic joint
12.	Nowa Huta Central Square	1952	symmetrical pentagon, 90 / 90 / 160 / 140 / 160	Plac Centralny im. Ronalda Reagana	symmetrical pentagon, 90 / 90 / 160 / 140 / 160	major traffic joint

Fig. 1. Selected data on the discussed square (n. 11) and other 11 important squares in Krakow (by the author)

METHODOLOGY

The paper was based mostly on the author's research in the archives: national, municipal, cooperative, private. The significant amount of relevant documentation on the neighbourhood, of both planning and administration character, was found in the archives and studied thoroughly. The research was conducted at three basic levels of urban morphology: the town plan; the building fabric; the land and building use (Conzen, 2018, 128). The descriptions of the original conditions and the reconstructions of the presumed intentions of the neighbourhood's founders and its planner

were made as well. For the introductory and comparative reasons the analysis of the discussed square was also preceded with the background of the most important Krakow squares, while the final results were confronted with that data as well. The general idea and history of square took into account the discourses provided in numerous publications, e.g. (Webb, 1990), (Kostof, 1991), (Krier, 2009); the Krakow urban history issues were mainly discussed in (Motak, 2018a).

FINDINGS

The Osiedle Urzędnicze (Official Neighbourhood) in Krakow was planned for the cooperative called Towarzystwo Osiedli Urzędniczych (Officials' Neighbourhoods Association), which had been registered in 1921. The association's founders hoped to create "a new city next to the existing city" (Motak, 2018b, 5). The regulation plan, found by the paper's author in the National Archive, was made in late 1924 by engineer Marian Lenk (1878–1961), who was so far unknown in the history of Krakow planning. It covered 9 hectares near the northeastern borderline of then recently extended Greater Krakow. Eight streets (four external, four internal), the square, and 78 plots were delineated. The streets and the square were lined with trees on one or both sides. There was water (river, mill creek, water ditch) along three out of four edges of the neighbourhood, therefore two regular bridges and some smaller crossings were planned to provide access from the city centre.

77 of 78 plots were intended to be occupied by residential buildings (23 detached, 44 semi-detached, 10 row-houses) with gardens, while just one was to be of another function—most probably the community building. Little is known about the latter building, however the way it was shown in the plan (its size, specific shape and arcaded passage along the front side) suggests it could be intended to house the cooperative seat and amenities such as shops and services. The building formed one of the square's frontages whereas two other frontages consisted of 5 row-houses each, six of which, i.e., those in the frontages' centres and far sides, could have shops and services at the ground floors.

Unlike the streets, the square of the Urzędnicze Neighbourhood has never received an official name. However, since it was necessary to refer to it in the documents, it was informally called "Antoni Potocki Square" or "Potockis Square" (count Antoni Potocki ceded the land for the cooperative in 1923) or... just "Rynek", i.e., "Market Square". In the 1950s the square was sometimes called "Kółko", i.e., "Little Circle" by residents. All those names have been entirely forgotten and the official name of the place has been reduced to the names of intersecting streets.

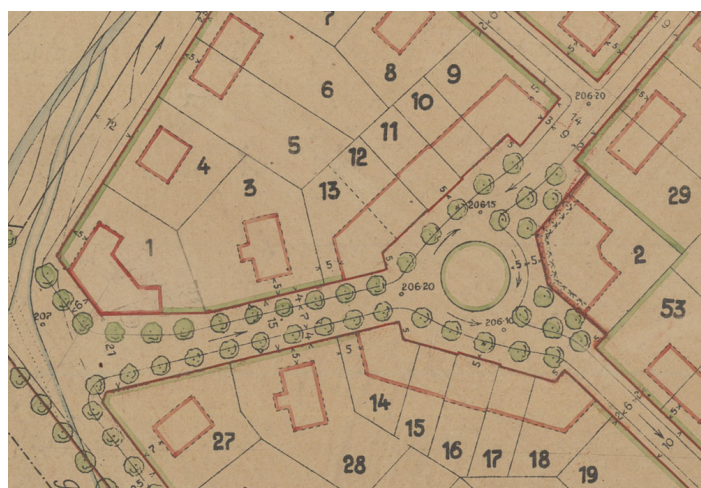


Figure 2. The square with the presumed community building (number 2, on the right). Part of the Urzędnicze (Official) Neighbourhood regulation plan by Marian Lenk, 1924, from the National Archives in Krakow

The Urzędnicze Neighbourhood square was granted an octagonal shape which was symmetrical, though it was not a regular polygon (Fig. 2). The presumed community building tended to terminate the vista of the street that provided the entry into the neighbourhood from the city centre via other neighbourhoods, which were also planned by Marian Lenk. In 1925 and 1926 he was responsible for regulation plans of three small enclaves of Oficerskie (Officer) Neighbourhood and large "Territories"; soon it was called Oficerskie Neighbourhood as a whole, except for the Urzędnicze Neighbourhood, which for some time retained its name. All plans together created the new district of c. 600 plots—a garden suburb of Krakow (Fig. 3). A number of squares of various shapes and sizes were localised along two major streets (Motak, 2018b). Two sequences, consisting of three and four squares, led to the square of Urzędnicze Neighbourhood, making it the final, respectively, fourth or fifth square of the pattern that was much more original and sophisticated than the standard distribution of squares used in the gridiron plans (Kostof, 1991, 144).



Figure 3. Regulation plans of the Urzędnicze Neighbourhood (top right), Oficerskie Neighbourhood (far left and bottom), and so-called Territories. The original plans by Marian Lenk (and associates), separately made in 1924–1926, stored in the National Archives in Krakow, assembled by Maciej Motak and Maciej Kapołka in 2017

As far as the Urzędnicze Neighbourhood is concerned, 28 houses were built on 32 plots (some of the neighbouring plots were collected meanwhile) by 1939, including 4 out of 10 row-houses defining two frontages of the square. The Second World War in 1939–1945 put a halt to its further development and also resulted in the division of the neighbourhood by the 1942-built military railway tracks; the square remained in the southern, larger part. After the war the development continued, although with smaller houses due to the post-war limitations and with the original regulations taken into account less strictly and more informally. The still incomplete square was not much altered then despite the fact the regulation lines and height objectives were no-longer-valid. But in the early 1960s the regulations were finally abandoned to let build a number of multifamily blocks of flats on the unbuilt and expropriated plots, which brought the major change to the neighbourhood's image.

The first block of flats was localised next to the square and partly in place of the once planned community building, on the two and a half unbuilt and collected plots of the original plan. Unlike six nearby blocks that were built in the late 1960s according to typical designs, it was not typical yet, housing 75 flats on five floors and with five staircases. Next, on the adjacent plot and a half the multifunctional two-storey pavilion was built according to the individual design instead of a proposed typical one-storey one. It housed two shops on the ground floor and the library, hairdresser's and youth club on the upper floor. The block of flats and the pavilion (Fig. 4), which were designed separately by architects, respectively Aleksander Nikodemowicz in 1961 and Kazimierz Chodorowski in 1964, were spatially, though not functionally, connected with a "bridge" link at the pavilion's upper floor level. That solution enabled easier pedestrian access to the block's yard and the entries into staircases.

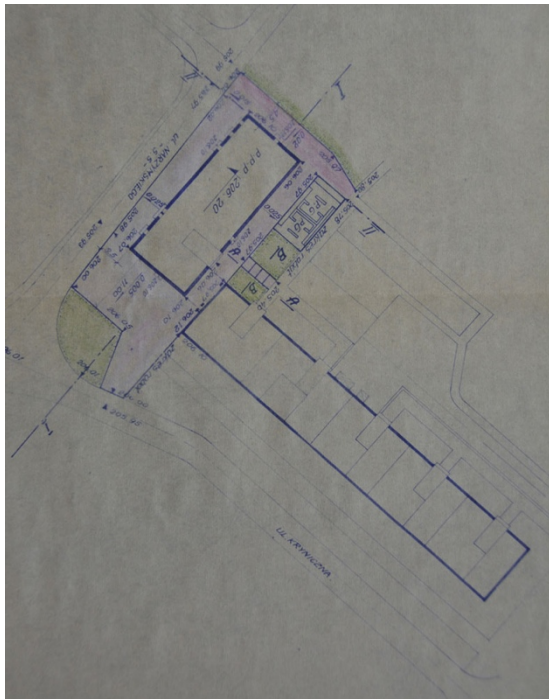


Figure 4. The area of the square of the neighbourhood, with two new buildings: pavilion (left) and block of flats (right). The technical road plan made in 1967 by Kazimierz Chodorowski and L. Legeżyński, stored in the archive of the cooperative "Wspólnota", Krakow.

As a result of the block of flats and the pavilion completion in 1964 and 1967, respectively, the 1924 plan finally discontinued, its original composition lost or rather replaced by a different one. Unlike the original, almost entirely symmetrical composition of the square, the final composition was fully asymmetrical in terms of both the plan and the volumes of two buildings. Instead of the community building's façade mid-point, a small void and link between two buildings became a focal point of the compositional axis (Fig. 5). The imbalance of functions mirrored the imbalance of volumes, too.



Figure 5. The view of the Narzymskiego St. towards the square. Two 1930s row-houses in the foreground left and foreground right. Two 1960s buildings in the background: the pavilion (left) and the block of flats (right). Photograph by Maciej Motak, 2016.

CONCLUSIONS

First of all, one ought to note the compositional value and the most original shape of the Urzędnicze Neighbourhood's square that was designed in 1924. In Poland, let alone Krakow, that particular shape is absolutely unique. Though the octagonal squares were actually designed in some cases, they usually tended to be regular polygons, e.g. the 1821 New Town Market Square in Łódź. Therefore the 1924 planned shape of the square can be found both sophisticated and unique.

Secondly, it should be pointed out that the 1961–1964 composition was highly contrastive towards the 1924 plan idea. However, it does not seem to have been created for the art's sake. It reflected the highly Modernist approach by being devoid of symmetry, balance, and a traditional image of buildings topped with steep roofs; instead it preferred asymmetry, imbalance and cubic volumes with flat roofs. Significantly, it was juxtaposed near the older plan without taking much of it into consideration (Fig. 6).

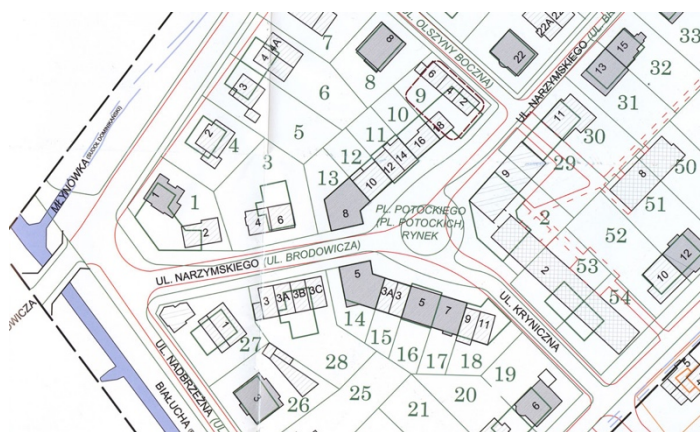


Figure 5. The overlapping plans and their results: part of 1924 regulation plan of Urzędnicze Neighbourhood and the present plan of the same area, evaluated by Maciej Motak, drawn by Maciej Kapołka in 2018

The discussed block of flats began a series of multifamily residential projects which resulted in the large increase in the population of the neighbourhood. The pavilion provided facilities and amenities that were necessary for the growing community. The new complex of two buildings

became the spatial and functional centre of the new district whose edges were defined, with time, clearly and perhaps more precisely than in the original plan, making it a characteristic example of a district (Lynch, 1960, 99). Its present shape and image results both from the 1920s plan and the 1960s alterations, as well as from a number of smaller actions.

Finally, the history and transformation of the Urzędnicze Neighbourhood's square and the entire neighbourhood seem in the author's opinion to make a miniature history and to exemplify Poland's town-planning in the recent hundred years, especially the 1920s' and 1960s' trends.

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